

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**[1]** Imagery.

words on a page that create an image following from your mind.

God's Word is full of imagery –

And from our Gospel reading there is  
imagery depicting the relationship of Jesus  
and all who are baptized into him.

There are images

- **[2-3]** of Jesus and his Bride, the Church;
- **[4]** of Jesus as the head and we as his Body;
- **[5]** of Jesus the Shepherd of the sheep; and, in today's text,
- **[6]** of Jesus the vine and all who are united to him in faith as the branches.

We have been united to Christ by faith, as branches to a vine.

The vine, Jesus, is the source of our life and the fruit that we bear.

The vine gives life to us, the branches.

**[1]** *Jesus said, “I am the true vine...”* Let us understand what this means.

**[7]** You might not think much of the words, “I am.”

For you use them regularly:

**[8]** “I am leading worship.” **[9]** “I am hungry.” **[10]** “I am done.”

**[11]** But when Jesus uses this pronoun and simple verb –

Well, in the Gospel of John it is code.

Seven times St. John describes Jesus as the “I am.”

**[12]** I am the bread of life (6:48)

**[13]** I am the light of the world (8:12)

**[14]** I am the door (10:9)

**[15]** I am the good shepherd (10:11)

**[16]** I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)

**[17]** I am the way, and the truth, and the life (14:6)

**[18]** I am the true vine (15:1)

Each of these statements are tied to a miracle or a sign.

Seven times John expresses that Jesus is God.

To be clear...

The object of the statement expresses an attribute of God.

But the Subject and verb expresses that Jesus is God.

[*Moses*]

Remember the bush that did not burn up?

Moses ran away from Egypt because he killed a man.

And for forty years he tended sheep in the wilderness  
for his father-in-law Jethro.

While tending his sheep on the mountainside,  
a strange site caught Moses eye.

You know, the sort of thing where you take a double take.

“Did I just see what I thought I saw?

Is that bush on fire, but not burning up?”

Inquisitive, Moses went to check it out.

From within the fire, came the voice of God.

And among many other things, God revealed his name.

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.

This is what you are to say to the Israelites:

‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14)

God’s name is I AM. And Jesus says, “I AM.”

[*Garden*] We might not get it, but the Jews know the code. They hear it!

Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and had prayed three times.

The riotous crowd was near.

They were coming to arrest Jesus.

AND Jesus knowing all that was going to happen to him,

went out and asked the crowd, “Who is it you want?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied.

“I am he,” is the English translation you will read,

but in the Greek Jesus simply says, “Ego eimi” which mean “I AM.”

When Jesus said, “I AM” the crowd drew back and fell to the ground.

They fell because they understood the code.

They knew that is meant Jesus was God.

This man was God.

[2] *Jesus said, “I am the true vine.”*

Jesus is the TRUE vine.

What does it mean that he is the TRUE vine?

The vine is frequently used in the Old Testament as a symbol of Israel.

Psalm 80:8 “You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.”

But Isreal as the vine is often shown lacking in some way.

Isaiah 5:7 “The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.”

But Jesus is the true vine. There is nothing lacking in this vine.

*[3] Jesus said, “I am the vine, and you are the branches.”*

The second time Jesus is clear to say He is the vine and that we are the branches.

You see, Jesus is clear to define the relationship between himself and us.

The Vine gives life to the branches.

This union is God's doing and his design.

**[LAW: redefine]** Yet, sinful man is always trying to redefine God's good designs.

God says that Jesus alone is the way and the truth and the life,

but sinful man finds no problem mixing in a little bit of their own reasoning.

God says that children are to honor their father and mother,

but somehow, sinful parents would rather be their child's best friend.

The way God orders our lives is good,

but our attempt to tailor-fit his designs to our sinful wants is not good.

God has united us to Christ in Holy Baptism for our good,

and yet we often live as if we are not united to Christ—

as if we are not branches living from the vine.

Jesus makes clear that apart from the vine, branches can do nothing!

Just as a branch that is removed from the vine soon withers and dies,

so we have no life apart from Jesus, the true Vine.

We can claim to be Christians and

tout our church membership or

show our confirmation certificate,

but apart from the life-giving nourishment of God's grace

in Christ Jesus (the vine),

we cannot live or bear any fruit.

Those who live apart from the Vine,

who do not hear his Word and receive his Sacraments,

are like withered branches that are picked up and thrown into the fire.

[*GOSPEL*]

But in union with the Vine, the branches live.

The sap that flows from the vine nourishes the branches.

We confess that our very lives sprout from our Creator God,  
and that by our sin, we have cut ourselves off from the source of our life.

Yet, by his grace through the blood of his Son,  
shed on the cross for the sin of the world,  
we have been reconciled to God.

[*LAW: in Christ*] As branches, we have been grafted back into the true Vine.

Therefore we must be in Christ:

- in the Word of God;
- in prayer with God,
- in worship, and
- receiving the sacraments – being baptized and taking Holy Communion.

Christ is the vine: we are the branches.

He daily nourishes and strengthens us with the forgiveness of sins  
he earned for us on the cross.

*A life in the vine* is being a disciple.

And here at Our Redeemer we are about

***“Equipping Disciples to make Disciples for Christ!”*** Amen.